

Historic Preservation at Vandenberg Air Force Base

Holly Dunbar

The National Park Service has awarded a contract to the Chambers Group, Inc., Irvine, CA, for archeological survey, data recovery, National Register evaluation of prehistoric and historic properties, and preparation of an historic preservation plan for Vandenberg Air Force Base, a 98,400-acre coastal installation located in south-central California, 60 miles northwest of Santa Barbara. Nearly two million dollars in funding for the current cultural resources investigations are being provided by the U.S. Air Force, with some assist through the Department of Defense Legacy Program. Principal investigator for the research is Dr. Phillip de Barros. Co-principal investigators are Carmen Weber, also of the Chambers Group, and Craig Woodman of Chambers' primary subcontract affiliate, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), Goleta, CA.

Historic preservation at Vandenberg is now in its 24th year. (The Vandenberg-NPS partnership is in its 21st year.) With only 7% of the Base surveyed, over 700 archeological sites spanning nearly 9,000 years of prehistory have been recorded. These include several large and highly significant Chumash village sites known from early Spanish Mission records. However, Vandenberg also contains a challenging array of potentially significant historic properties in need of evaluation and treatment.

These include remains dating from the Mexican Period, Chinese fishing camps probably associated with building of the Southern Pacific Railroad, World War II, and Cold War Period structures, and unique and highly specialized engineering properties associated with Vandenberg's commitment to Space Age programs.

The current phase of cultural resources investigations is being conducted under an Advisory Council programmatic agreement (in preparation), an interagency agreement between Vandenberg Air Force Base and the National Park Service-Western Region, and a long standing but recently revised and updated Native American memorandum of agreement with the local Santa Ynez Reservation. The University of California at Santa Barbara will maintain collections and research data emanating from the Vandenberg projects pursuant to yet another memorandum of agreement. Contract delivery orders will include research and data assessment for the development of the Base Historic Preservation Plan, survey, rock art, public reports, and in-depth site evaluations. The latter will require limited data recovery and prestabilization assessments of several National Register eligible prehistoric sites that are threatened by coastal and riverine erosion. The prestabilization assessments will be conducted by Dr. John Ehrenhard, NPS-Atlanta, and Dr. Robert Thorne, University of Mississippi, under a special cooperative agreement for interagency site stabilization studies.

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Interdisciplinary Manager Course Develops

James Corless

For five years the "Facility Manager Development" course has been instrumental in meeting the NPS call for highly trained managers in the maintenance field. In 1993, for the first time, that course was expanded to include park professionals in maintenance, interpretation, law enforcement, and administration. Thirty-six individuals, mostly supervisors—some line, some division chiefs—from these four disciplines came together for the "Leadership and Management Skills" course at Albright Employee Development Center in January. The course was made possible through the efforts of the NPS Employee Development Division, the Washington divisions of Interpretation, Engineering and Safety Service, and Park Planning and Protection, and the regional administrative offices.

During the five weeks of the course, this group came together not only in locality, but intellectually as well. The course provided countless opportunities to approach problems from a multi-disciplinary perspective, using the collective diversity of knowledge and skills of the varied group. The result was dramatic.

Participants, who themselves pointed out that they often were at odds with other divisions in their parks, found that they were able to meet management objectives far better when they worked with these other disciplines from the very start of planning or problem-solving activities. And in most instances, their own objectives were met in the process. This is being confirmed when participants go on their individual four-week details to new units—and often to new divisions—to broaden their experience and put their new learning to the test.

However, the one shortfall of the course was the scarcity of natural and cultural resource management expertise. While the course agenda included resource management topics, the exercises would have been even more powerful if resource management specialists had been included to add their perspective and respond to the objectives of the other disciplines.

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“Teamwork,” the tired, frequently overused label, was mentioned only once in the course agenda. However, without thinking much about it or calling for it directly, a team approach developed quickly as participants became room mates, then work mates solving exercise problems, then often friends who discussed their park concerns to come up with creative solutions. They recognized their differences but soon found that they could help each other, not only in the exercises, but in planning after-hours activities, preparing for classwork, taking a hike in the canyon, or in addressing existing park issues.

At the course’s conclusion, with equal enthusiasm for each discipline, the group themselves adopted an action plan—a set of objectives and actions—to further their self-defined mission: to strengthen the pride and vision of the NPS by empowering people through creative leadership and an interdisciplinary team approach. The first objective was to attain a pervasive awareness throughout the service of the need for interdisciplinary efforts. This article is one of the actions identified to achieve this objective—to call attention to the course and to the enthusiasm the course participants have for working together to achieve park goals.

Focuses of the course included human resources management—a delegation of responsibility and authority approach was advocated, one of the elements of effective leadership. Diversity in personal and work styles was illustrated through testing participants and illustrating how diverse styles can complement each other in a work environment. Decision making, time and risk management, communications and negotiating, press relations, and managing change were all interesting components of the management curriculum. Sessions on planning linked well with the resource management segments, and Associate Director Jack Davis fittingly linked the course to the Vail Agenda and the leadership required as the NPS enters the 21st century.

Nine each of park interpreters, administrators, maintenance professionals, and protection rangers have committed themselves to professional leadership and management of park resources into the next century after completing this course, what many called their “best course ever.” Their hope is that all park specialists are able to join in this program through future courses to share knowledge and understanding among an even wider group of park professionals.

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measured drawings and photographs and undertake documentary research on a historic building as well as analyze materials deterioration in a laboratory setting. For the museum studies focus, the Center’s James Monroe Museum, also a National Historic Landmark, offers students an opportunity to develop exhibitions. Folklore-focused students may document vernacular buildings in a rural landscape. For those students who select historical archeology as a focus, the Germanna Archaeology Project (Governor Alexander Spotswood’s 18th century plantation manor house) or the Market Square site in downtown Fredericksburg provide literal hands-on experience.

Classroom work frequently involves projects with community value. For example, students are required to prepare nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and to shepherd the nominations through the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Students also create documents to be used in a wider venue, such as preparing a computerized database for the Mutual Assurance Society insurance policies from the 1790s to the 1860s, making accessible information on Virginia buildings that includes site maps, floor plans, and building materials. Other projects include the creation of a database on advertisements for runaways from the 1740s to the 1780s, made from those published in the *Virginia Gazette*, which will provide valuable information on the ethnography of the indentured white laborers; the preparation of an index to the journal of the *Association for Preservation Technology*; and the re-survey of properties in the Fredericksburg Historic District using the National Park Service’s Integrated Preservation Software to update the district’s documentation (since its listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971).

What is the future of the College’s historic preservation program? Clearly, the undergraduate program has reached a threshold in its evolution. Department chairman W. Brown Morton III reflects: “The hard work of basic undergraduate program development is accomplished. We will continue to strive for excellence. We are presently developing a curriculum for a graduate program in cultural resource management.”

On the horizon are expanded architectural conservation and historical archeology laboratories. The program is working toward the use of Computer Assisted Drafting (CAD) to document historic and archeological properties. The folklore and folklife laboratory class will be developed. Finally, the Center for Historic Preservation will expand international academic and field work opportunities for students, faculty, and alumni. Across the nation, the “business of preservation” has subsided with changes to the federal tax code and the recession. However, the late Prince B. Woodard’s vision of historic preservation as liberal arts has found a secure niche in higher education at Mary Washington College.

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